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**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in this application.

Listing of claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of protecting plants from insects comprising:  
applying a formulation comprising partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes and a carrier to plant surfaces growing above the surface of the ground, said formulation having an ~~Aw~~ of from about 0.98 to about 0.94 a water activity of from about 0.94 to about 0.98, said carrier comprising water and a at least one substance which maintains the ~~Aw~~ water activity of the formulation at levels ~~between about 0.98 and about 0.94~~ of from about 0.94 to about 0.98 when exposed to air at 70% relative humidity and 25°C for 24 hours.
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said carrier comprises~~ the at least one substance is chosen from water-retentive ~~polymer~~ polymers.
3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, wherein ~~said~~ the at least one substance is chosen from water-retentive ~~polymer is a gel-forming polymer~~ polymers that are gel-forming polymers.
4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said carrier comprises a humectant~~ the at least one substance is chosen from humectants.
5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, wherein ~~said~~ the humectant is chosen from glycerol, polyethylene glycol, soluble collagen, ~~or and sorbital~~ sorbitol.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said carrier comprises a water-retentive polymer and a humectant~~ the carrier comprises at least one water-retentive polymer and at least one humectant.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said formulation comprises a water-retentive polymer~~ the at least one substance is chosen from water-retentive polymers and the formulation further comprises a UV protectant.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~said formulation comprises a humectant~~ the at least one substance is chosen from humectants and an and the formulation further comprises a UV protectant.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4 ~~6~~, wherein ~~said~~ the ~~the~~ the formulation further comprises ~~a water-retentive polymer, a humectant and an~~ a UV protectant.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the entomopathogenic nematode ~~is a member of the family~~ nematodes are of the family Steinernematidae or the family Heterorhabditidae.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the entomopathogenic nematodes are symbiotically associated with Enterobacteriaceae bacteria ~~in the family~~ Enterobacteriaceae.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes have enhanced survival after application to soil or plants as compared to entomopathogenic nematodes that have not been desiccated.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes are third-stage infective juveniles.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the entomopathogenic nematodes have been partially desiccated by placing said nematodes in environments of progressively-decreasing relative humidity or aqueous solutions of progressively-increasing concentrations of glycerol.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the formulation is applied to foliage of the plant.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the formulation is applied by spraying.

18. (Currently Amended) A formulation for protecting plants from insects, comprising:

- a) partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes, and
- b) a carrier, ~~said carrier~~ comprising water and a substance for maintaining the ~~Aw~~ water activity of the formulation at levels ~~between~~ of from about 0.94 to about 0.98 ~~and 0.94~~ when exposed to air at 70% relative humidity and 25°C for 24 hours; and wherein said formulation is a liquid or gel ~~and has an Aw less than 0.99~~.

19. (Currently Amended) The formulation of claim 18, wherein ~~said~~ the substance is a water-retentive polymer, a humectant, or a combination of a water-retentive polymer and a humectant.

20. (Currently Amended) The formulation of claim 18, further comprising an ~~UV~~ ultraviolet protectant.

21. (Currently Amended) A formulation for protecting plants from insects, comprising:

a) partially-desiccated entomopathogenic nematodes having ~~an  $A_w$~~  a water activity of between 0.950 and 0.980, and

b) a carrier, ~~said carrier~~ comprising water and a substance for maintaining the  $A_w$  water activity of the formulation at levels between about 0.940 and 0.980 ~~and 0.940~~ when exposed to air at 70% relative humidity and 25°C for 24 hours, wherein said substance is a humectant or a water-retentive polymer or both; and

wherein said formulation is a liquid or gel and has ~~an  $A_w$~~  a water activity of from about 0.940 to about 0.980 ~~to about 0.940~~.

22. (New) A method of preserving nematodes comprising:

suspending viable nematodes in a solution having a water activity of from about 0.94 to about 0.98.

23. (New) The method according to claim 22, wherein the solution comprises at least one of water-retentive polymers and humectants.

24. (New) The method according to claim 23, wherein the solution comprises at least one water-retentive polymer.

25. (New) The method according to claim 24, wherein the water-retentive polymer is a gel-forming polymer.

26. (New) The method according to claim 25, wherein the gel-forming polymer is chosen from agaroses, carbopols, carrageenans, dextrans, guar gums, and gellan gums.

27. (New) The method according to claim 23, wherein the solution comprises at least one humectant.

28. (New) The method according to claim 27, wherein the humectant is chosen from glycerol, polyethylene glycol, soluble collagen, Folicote, Norbak, sorbitol, Rodspray, and Nufilm.

29. (New) The method according to claim 28, wherein the humectant comprises glycerol.

30. (New) The method according to claim 29, wherein the solution comprises about 25% or less glycerol by weight.

31. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one substance comprises at least one water-retentive polymer and at least one humectant.